We Claim:

1. An immunoreactive peptide which is homologous with the AA 12 to 235 region of VZV VP26.

2. An immunoreactive peptide which essentially comprises the AA 12 to 235 region of VZV VP26.

3. A nucleic acid which encodes the amino acid sequence as claimed in claim 1.

4. An immunoreactive peptide which can be prepared by expressing the nucleic acid as claimed in claim 3.

5. A nucleic acid which corresponds to the nucleotide sequence depicted in Figure 1.

6. A nucleic acid which hybridizes under stringent conditions with the nucleic acid as claimed in claim 3 and encodes a peptide, wherein the peptide is recognized by antibodies directed against VZV but not recognized by antibodies which are directed against other herpes- viruses.

7. An immunochemical method for detecting antibodies against VZV in a sample, comprising the step (a) contacting an immunoreactive peptide as described in claim 1 with the sample and (b) determining binding between antibody in the sample and the peptide.

8. A method as described in claim 7, wherein step b is carried out indirectly by competition of the peptide in a solution.

9. A method for detecting VZV from a sample comprising the steps of contacting a nucleic acid as described in claim 3, with the sample to allow hybridiztion of the nucleic acid, and determining the presence of nucleic acid hybrid formed.

10. The use of a nucleic acid as claimed in claim 3 for detecting VZV by means of nucleic acid hybridization.

11. A test kit for detecting antibodies against VZV, which comprises an immunoreactive peptide as claimed in claim 1.

12. A test kit for detecting VZV, which comprises a nucleic acid as claimed in claim 3.